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By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

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SIMPLICITY is with juſtice eſteemed a ſupreme excellence in all the performances of art, becauſe by this quality they more nearly reſemble the productions of nature: and the productions of nature have ever been accounted nobler, and of an higher order, in proportion to their SIMPLICITY. Hence ariſes (if the ladies will permit me to philoſophize a moment) the ſuperior excellence of ſpirit to matter, which is evidently a combination of many particles, whereas the firſt is pure, uncompounded, and indiviſible.

BUT

But let us deſcend from lofty ſpeculations, and uſeleſs metaphyſics, into common life and familiar arts, in order more fully to diſplay the beauties of a JUST SIMPLICITY, to which the preſent age ſeems not to pay a proper regard in various inſtances.

NOTHING can be more tireſome and nauſeous to a virtuoſo of a true judgment and a juſt eye in painting, than the gawdy glitter of florid colours, and a vaſt profuſion of light, unſubdued by ſhade, and undiverſified with teints of a browner caſt. It is recorded, that ſome of the capital pieces of Apelles were wrought in four colours only. This exquiſite artiſt invented alſo a kind of darkening varniſh, that might temper and chaſtiſe all dazzling ſplendor and unneceſſary glare, and might give, as Pliny expreſſes it, a modeſty and auſterity to his works. Thoſe who have been unaccuſtomed to the beſt models, are uſually at firſt more delighted with the productions of the Flemiſh than the Italian ſchool; and prefer Reubens to Raphael, till they feel by experience, that luſcious and gay colouring defeats the very end of the art, by turning the attention from its principal excellencies; that is, from TRUTH, SIMPLICITY, and DESIGN.

IF theſe obſervations are rightly founded, what ſhall we ſay of the taſte and judgment of thoſe, who ſpend their lives and their fortunes in collecting pieces, where neither perſpective, nor proportion, nor conformity to nature, are thought of or obſerved; I mean the extravagant lovers and purchaſers of CHINA, and INDIAN ſcreens. I ſaw a ſenſible foreigner aſtoniſhed at a late auction, with the exorbitant prices given for theſe SPLENDID DEFORMITIES, as he called them, while an exquiſite painting of Guido paſſed unnoticed, and was ſet aſide, as unfaſhionable lumber. Happy ſhould I think

myſelf

myſelf to be able to convince the fair connoiſſeurs that make the greateſt part of Mr. Langford's audiences, that no genuine beauty is to be found, in whimſical and groteſque figures, the monſtrous offſpring of wild imaginations, undirected by nature and truth.

IT is of equal conſequence to obſerve SIMPLICITY in architecture as in painting. A multiplicity of minute ornaments; a vaſt variety of angles, and cavities; cluſters of little columns, and a crowd of windows, are what diſtinguiſh MEANNESS OF MANNER in building from GREATNESS; that is, the Gothic from the Grecian; in which every decoration ariſes from neceſſity and uſe, and every pillar has ſomething to ſupport.

Mark how the dread PANTHEON *ſtands,*
Amid the domes of modern hands!
Amid the toys of idle ſtate,
How SIMPLY, *how ſeverely great!*

ſays the celebrated author of the ode to lord Huntington. Nothing therefore offends me more than to behold the revival of this barbarous taſte, in ſeveral villa's, temples, and pleaſure-houſes, that diſgrace the neighbourhood of this metropolis. Nay, ſometimes in the front of the ſame edifice to find a Grecian plan adulterated and defiled by the unnatural and impure mixture of Gothic whimſies.

Deſinit in piſcem mulier formoſa ſuperne. HOR.

WHOEVER conſiders the lateſt importations of muſic and muſicians from Italy, will be convinced that the modern maſters of that country have loſt that beautiful SIMPLICITY, which is generally the ornament of every muſical compoſition, and which really dignified thoſe of their predeceſſors. They have introduced ſo many intricate diviſions, wild variations, and uſeleſs repetitions, without any apparent neceſſity ariſing either from the

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words or from any other incident, that the chief ambition of the Compoſer ſeems to be rather to ſurprize the ear than to pleaſe the judgment; and that of the Performer to ſhew his execution rather than his expreſſion. It is from theſe motives that the hearer is often confounded, but not delighted, with ſudden and unnatural tranſitions from the key, and returns to it as unnatural as the tranſitions themſelves; while Pathos, the ſoul of muſic, is either unknown or totally neglected. Thoſe who have ſtudied the works of Corelli among the modern-ancients, and Handel in the preſent age, know, that the moſt affecting paſſages of the former owe their excellence to SIMPLICITY alone, and that the latter underſtands it as well and attends to it as much, though he knows when to introduce with propriety thoſe niceties and refinements, which, for want of that propriety, we condemn in others.

IN every ſpecies of writing, whether we conſider ſtyle or ſentiment, SIMPLICITY is a beauty. The perfection of language, ſays the great father of criticiſm, conſiſts in its being perſpicuous but not low. A redundancy of metaphors, a heap of ſounding and florid epithets, remote alluſions, ſudden flaſhes of wit, and lively epigramatic turns, dazzle the imginations, and captivate the minds of vulgar readers, who are apt to think the SIMPLE manner unanimated and dull, for want of being acquainted with the models of the great antique. Xenophon among the Greeks, and Cæſar among the Romans, are at once the pureſt and moſt ſimple, as well as the moſt elegant writers, any age or nation can produce. *Nudi enim ſunt, recti, & venuſti, omni ornatû orationis, tanquam veſte, detracto.* Among ourſelves, no writer has perhaps made ſo happy and judicious a

mixture

mixture of plain and figurative terms as Addiſon, who was the firſt that baniſhed from the Engliſh, as Boileau from the French, every ſpecies of bad eloquence and falſe wit, and opened the gates of the Temple of Taſte, to his fellow-citizens.

It ſeems to be the fate of poliſhed nations to degenerate and depart from a SIMPLICITY of ſentiment. For when the firſt, and moſt obvious thoughts have been pre-occupied by former writers, their ſucceſſors, by ſtraining to be original and new, abound in far-fetched ſentiments, and forced conceits. Some late inſtances in men of genius (for none but theſe are capable of committing this fault) give occaſion to us to deprecate this event. I muſt add, under this head, that ſimplicity of fable is an indiſpenſable quality in every legitimate drama. We are too much enamoured with what is called intrigue, buſineſs and buſtle, in our plays. We are diſguſted with the thinneſs, that is, the unity of a plot. We muſt enrich it with epiſodes or under-characters: and we never conſider, how much our attention is diverted and deſtroyed by different objects, and our pity divided and weakened, by an intricate multiplicity of events and of perſons. The Athenians therefore, who could reliſh ſo SIMPLE a plot, as that of the Philoctetes of Sophocles, had certainly either more patience, or more good ſenſe, (I will not determine which) than my preſent countrymen.

If we raiſe our thoughts to a ſubject of more importance than writing, I mean dreſs; even in this ſublime ſcience, SIMPLICITY ſhould ever be regarded. It might be thought preſumption in me to cenſure any part of

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